

## DECORATION DAY ADDRESS

MAY 30, 1902.

BY C. C. GOODWIN.

Walk softly here, this spot is holy ground,  
 Low be each voice, uncovered be each head,  
 For here beneath each consecrated mound  
 A hero sleeps within his narrow bed—  
 Hushed in the dreamless slumber of the dead.  
 Drape with warm flowers these couches low and cold,  
 For in their youth, when hopes were sweet and high,  
 These sleeping stalwarts volunteered to hold  
 Their country's flag advanced in majesty;  
 To fight for native land, to fight, if needs be die.

## SOLDIERS AND CITIZENS:

As time is reckoned, a generation of men has lived and died since the lips of the last cannon fired in the great civil war grew cold.

The glorious hosts who then furled their flags, broke ranks and merged back into the armies of peace, have more than half passed on. Nearly every distinguished officer has died. The soldiers who are left are bending under the infirmities of age.

This ceremony of decorating the graves in which the heroes sleep becomes more touching and pathetic with every return of the sacred day.

The graves increase in number. The hands of living comrades to dress them grow fewer and fewer. Taps are ever sounding—there are no reveilles.

The placing of wreaths upon the mounds beneath which our fallen soldiers sleep is a sacred custom. Not that the sleepers need the attention, because they passed

"With the Psalm of the guns to the peace of God,"

but the ceremony is needed by the living that the lesson of the lives of the dead may not be lost upon the nation.

Long ago it was said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." It was and still is true, so when to vindicate a great principle, or in defence of native land or of humanity, the young men of the nation rise up and offer their lives, the world is thrilled. The story of their self abnegation is handed down from father to son. The record electrifies and illuminates history.

Such records have made the punctuation points in the histories of Great Britain, France and Germany for a thousand years. Because of them, without demanding it, those countries compel the world's respect.

But all men cannot read. Many who can read are not much stirred, no matter how thrilling may be the story. But this ceremony today is an object lesson that all can understand—the simple story that some brave men in their youth, when all the world was to them lighted with hope, offered their lives in their country's defence—that the grateful memory of that sacrifice once a year takes form in tenderly draping their final couches with flowers.

Children watch this ceremony year by year. The impression made by it upon their plastic hearts is revealed when later another summons comes for the brave to rally to the defence of native land or for the honor of the flag.

We all realized this when the news of the sinking of the Maine was received.

Before even the call for soldiers was sounded the air was filled with murmurings such as presage a storm. When the call came there was a response such as the world had never seen before. From every state the sound of the tread of moving thousands rose up and filled the air. It was like the solemn pealing of the bells of Destiny.

That movement was mightily accelerated by the memories of the great preceding war, refreshed as they had been on every Decoration Day by the day's lofty ceremony. That was four years ago. Since then we have seen the soldiers of the Republic carry their immortal standards to Cuba and redeem that land which had been under the heel of the oppressor for centuries—redeem it by irresistible valor on land, by deeds upon the sea which make the splendors of Salamis and Actium seem petty by comparison.

We have seen the island which war had made a desert converted into a smiling garden.

Under the flag which our soldiers upheld we have seen the pestilence poise its black wings and fly away, the hungry fed, the hospital and school house up-reared, order established and justice given rule, and finally, when the time was ripe, we saw the sovereignty of the land given back to its own people, and the completed work makes the one page of the world's history on which the words are printed in letters all of gold and bordered by lines of everlasting light.

We saw, too, the same standard carried by like invincible heroes to the border of Asia, that country from which Freedom has been excluded from the first. The flag was a new light to the millions there. We saw the arm of Spain broken in the east, as it had been in the west—broken and all her oppressions arrested. We have watched ever since as the struggle has gone on—the struggle to beat down barbarism with its immemorial cruelties, the struggle to light there the lamp of learning and to impress the lesson of the necessity of yielding to the rule of order and of law before personal freedom can be secured to a people, and have from the first rested content, in full belief that the work of the soldiers there would be their final sublime vindication.

It is good, if possible, to add new solemnity to this ceremony every year.

But that is not enough. It is right to inquire why the mighty sacrifice was required of the men of 1861.

It was because, in the first place, the fathers were not quite true to duty; because, in the second place, the men and women of our country at last grew to following their hot passions rather than their cooler reasoning.

The fathers, north and south, at first looked upon human slavery as an evil. They accepted it as a necessary evil, because there was a continent to subdue to civilization and there were few toilers.

Steam had not then appeared to transfer from arms of flesh to arms of steel the world's burdens.

Few labor saving devices existed then. Only the clumsiest implements were in use.

There was no electric power, no magnetic telegraph nor telephone to act as men's messengers.

Only a rim of the forest along the Atlantic had been felled. To the west a continent awaited exploration and settlement. The work seemed illimitable, the hands were few.

It was then that slavery was accepted, the thought being that while it was an evil, still that the condition of the African in a state of merciful slavery was better than it had been in the pitiless savagery in which he was born.

The effect of slavery upon the white race which owned the slaves was not then considered.

When at last the separate colonies were organized into a federation of states and a new nation born, the slaves were assigned to one section of the Republic, and the men who then lived said to each other, "The evil will cure itself."

At that time there was no one with prescience enough to cry out: "We have made the debts of the states a common, national debt. Let us estimate the value of the slaves. Let us add that valuation to the other debt and make the slaves free, for a nation half slave and half free cannot long exist."

So the system was continued. Men killed the nettles and thistles in their gardens, but were blind enough to believe that eventually slavery would die from natural causes.

That was the first shrinking of a manifest duty on the part of the immortals of 1776.

A little later the cotton gin was invented. A little later still cotton began to take on sovereign attributes. With increasing wealth the men of the south began to search for new excuses for slavery and at last reasoned themselves into a belief that slavery, instead of being wrong, was really a divine institution and that a perfect civilization could rest on no other foundation.

At the same time the men of the north denounced the institution more and more, at last, in tone at least, assuming that they were more just and merciful

by nature than the men of the south, until the gathering anger at length crystallized into sectional hate. At last the hot passions drowned the pleadings of the conservative classes north and south and the mighty war was precipitated.

The nation's eyes had become so dimmed that only a bath of blood could wash them clear.

The struggle continued until "every drop of blood that had been drawn by the lash was paid for with one drawn by the sword," and the great lesson ought to have been learned, while watching the wreck and death, that when a wrong is committed by a nation, every part of the nation must pay its full ratio of the debt.

That all came from the fact that the fathers, great as they were, lacked a little in wisdom, or shirked a little their duty, by trying to cure an evil by paltry compromises.

It is good to call up that history on Decoration Day, because duties are all the time presenting themselves, calling for performance on the part of our countrymen, and alas, there is the same disposition to evade responsibility and to try compromises as of old, notwithstanding the lesson that there cannot be any compromise with wrong; that for every such attempt, the full penalty will be exacted.

This fact should be presented on every Decoration Day, that the conviction may be fixed in the hearts of the people, that every duty should be justly and fairly met before the penalty for neglect begins to expand and finally becomes a constantly increasing indebtedness.

Considering this, we do not forget the claims that are in some places made that our present war in the Philippines is an attempt to subdue a liberty loving people to subjection.

But we have no sympathy with those who dare to compare the treacherous tribes that occupy that region with the immortals of 1776, or who claim that their savage fight is but an appeal of men who would be free to the right of revolution, because a war for that kind of liberty, which is intended merely to perpetuate tyranny, rapacity, cruelty and ignorance, is not one out of which progress can emerge or upon which Justice can build a throne.

We do not pretend to know what God's plans for the world's advancement are, but we are Americans and do not envy those who are engaged in impeaching our own free institutions by interposing an indirect prayer for the perpetuation of rapine and cruelty and woman's shame in the Philippines, and who by indirection insult our flag and cast reproach upon the brave American soldiers who have been and still are fighting under the belief that no people are entitled to the gift of self government until what is merciless within them is subdued, and they are given the light to see that real Liberty is the most sacred of treasures and the intelligence and patriotism to guard the treasure, and none of us forget that our country's designs upon the Philippine people hold nothing more sinister in their scope than to make that people as free as you and I are today.

It is our grateful privilege today to decorate the graves of some of the soldiers whose lives went out in those far off islands, and while performing the sacred rite we exult in the thought that when the supreme test came the soldiers of Utah were rated as among the bravest of the brave.

Great armies in war's array are magnificent spectacles, but they do not compare in splendor to the armies of peace in our great Republic—the armies that till the fields, that work the mines, that build the ships, that run the trains, that tend the looms—all the hosts that awaken the music of the great country's industries as they daily, "following the sun and keeping company with the hours," fill the land with the stately anthems of peace.

Let us hope this may always be so. We may in the future have foreign wars, for international wars seem to be a part of the machinery of progress, but if we are careful that no other great wrong is ever permitted to grow until there can be no cure save through the dreadful surgery of the battle field, we will avoid any future war among our own people.

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